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PROGRAM Good Morning America

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SUBJECT Interview with Vlahos and Suvorov

DAVID HARTMAN: Yesterday George Shultz, our Secretary of State announced that -- and I'm quoting -- at 18:26 Greenwich Mean Time, a Soviet pilot told ground control his target was destroyed.

Now, that is just one of the details that illustrates the precision with which, apparently, the United States can monitor secret Soviet military conversations. The jet was shot down in a region where the Soviets have strategic military installations not far from major commercial airline routes.

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HARTMAN: Michael Vlahos, former CIA employee, is now Director of Security Studies at Johns Hopkins University. He joins us from Washington. And Viktor Suvorov is a pseudonym, as a matter of fact. You won't see his face. His voice will be somewhat electronically disguised. He is a Russian defector, former Soviet military officer. He's written a book called "Inside the Soviet Army," and he joins us by satellite, live, from London.

Mr. Vlahos, first of all, why did it take so long for us to know that this plane was shot down?

MICHAEL VLAHOS: Well, there's a procedure whereby intelligence that's collected, whether by satellite imagery or signals intelligence, or what we call comment, interception of communication transmissions, message traffic, has to be sorted out. And there's so much, there's such a huge volume of this kind of intercepted messages coming in to the United States that the process of filtration and running it through a computer that

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might be able to make some rough determination of what's important takes some time. And then it has to be analyzed.

Furthermore, the problem can be abetted if the messages are encrypted and have to be decoded.

So that there is going to be an elapsed period of time, especially in routine intercepts that we have no prior awareness of their importance in some specific operational fashion.

HARTMAN: Right.

Is there any reason -- we hear talk today and late last night about could this have been prevented. I mean, realistically, the way our intelligence operation works, whether it's Japan, Korea, United States, any of it, realistically, might this have been prevented? Could it have been stopped?

VLAHOS: Sure, if you want our military to be on full alert around the periphery of the Soviet Union, anticipating a hostile action, a warlike action on their part at all times. In other words, every time that something like this happens, the United States is blamed for some kind of intelligence failure or intelligence lapse. Whereas, in reality, our military can't be in a position of guaranteeing our security unless we're in a position close to combat status, where our units are on full alert.

So, unless you want to start escorting these passenger liners and having the kind of internal preparations of our intelligence apparatus to respond immediately to Soviet provocation, a la the good old days of the Cold War, then you can't expect that this kind of thing can be prevented in normal peacetime situations.

HARTMAN: Mr. Vlahos, thank you.

And now let's turn to London, Mr. Suvorov, a Soviet defector to the West.

Mr. Suvorov, why would the Soviet Union risk an incident of this nature? What's so important that they would take this chance, internationally?

VIKTOR SUVOROV: First of all, that area, Okhotsk Sea, it's extremely important area for Soviet Union. I repeat, extremely. In that area there is lots of -- it's a place of deployment of Soviet strategic submarine. There is Komsomolskiy, city Komsomolskiy, in which way built strategic nuclear submarine.

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Also, in that area there is quite a lots of missiles, like Soviet missiles type 8K84, which have a double capability. See, it's illegal missile. It's a missile can be ballistic missile and it can be anti-missile missile. You see, very concentrated. There is such a missile in that area.

HARTMAN: Excuse me.

It's also been suggested there may be camps of some kind, concentration camps, worker camps? Is that true?

SUVOROV: Of course. Oh, yes. In that area, there is, I know, three very terrible camps. You see, it's at Taria (?), Akushka (?), Olga (?), Chamor (?), Kalavaria (?). It is a very important camps in which the prisoners directly involved in a nuclear production. And aircraft been exactly nearly their concentration Taria. You see, it is a base of nuclear submarine and prisoners in that very big nuclear submarine base. They're involved in a very dangerous job. Yes. They change active zone of [unintelligible], you see.

So, it is a military secret and it is a political secret. So Soviet Union cannot have such a risk somebody will know that, you seek, somebody will make such a photograph, you see.

So, it's astonishing why they don't shot down that aircraft two hours, you see. If aircraft appear in that area of Taria, so it must be immediate action, you see.

Mr. Suvorov, thank you very much for joining us from London this morning. It's good to have you with us.

SUVOROV: Thank you very much.